

I have, therefore, thought it opportune to place once more the chief facts and relations of one of the most peculiar human afflictions before a larger circle of readers.

It is necessary to first sketch briefly the background and settings of the malady, for, like all human movements, it becomes intelligible only in the light of the preceding events.

The Dancing Mania appeared in extraordinary form and extent during one of those frightful periods of physical and mental depression which were unusually numerous in the middle ages. It followed closely in the path of the plague and the turmoils of a general disorder. Their moral effects were even more shocking than their physical devastation. Thus there died of plague¹: in London, between 20,000 and 30,000; a tremendous rate for the population of that time. The daily interments rose to 200 a day in one cemetery alone. (The old Charter house churchyard in London has a stone monument at its entrance bearing the inscription that 50,000 corpses were here interred. But this is undoubtedly based on a traditional exaggeration and was recorded about 22 years after the epidemic.) In Yarmouth there were about 7,000 deaths; in Leicester 1,377 of a population of 3,939; in Norwich, 15,000. (The record of 50,000 given by some for Norwich seems altogether impossible.) Oxford lost two-thirds of its academic population.

Significant are the, generally reliable, figures for the monasteries and clergy. Thus Higden, in "Polychronicon," states: "in some houses of religion, of twenty, were left but twain." In Croxton all monks died with exception of the abbot and prior. In Ely 28 out of 43. In the Archdeaconry of West Riding there were 96 vacancies in the year 1349, leaving 45 parishes in which incumbents survived. In East Riding 60 incumbents died out of 95 parishes. In East Anglia 800 parishes lost their parsons from March 1349 to March 1350; 80 parishes having been twice vacant and 10 three times. In the mountainous parts the ravages seemed to be less, but the Scots contracted and imported the disease into their country through one of their many invasions into English territory. In Ireland the epidemic appeared equally severe, although according to some it seems to have been somewhat less infected than the rest of Britain. But on the continent conditions were even more terrible. In Paris fully 50% of the population died and the daily death rate rose to 800; in Vienna the daily death rate is given as between 500 and 1,000; in Florence there died of plague 60,000; in Naples, 60,000; in Genoa, 40,000; in Avignon, 60,000; in Modena the whole population of one hundred succumbed; in Rome the dead were reported "countless"; in Strasburg, 16,000; in Lubeck (at that time an important part) 9,000. Cairo is reported on good authority to have lost at least 1,000 people a day; in Asia succumbed, according to a report to Pope Clement

1- The older figures of the mortality during the plague epidemic were much larger, but not very reliable. The figures here recorded are from the more critical recent works of Creighton (*Epidemics in Britain*, 1891, I), Haser (*Geschichte d. Medizin*, 1884) and Lersch (*Volkssennen*, 1896) where other details may be found.